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## A PREACHER'S INTEREST IN NIETZSCHE

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### I

Ridpath relates that, when General Grant was transferred from Vicksburg to command the army of the East, he plunged at once into the Wilderness and gave battle to Lee in two days of terrific fighting. It was then that Lee said to his officers, "Gentlemen, at last the army of the Potomac has a head."

The incident will hint my main justification of a preacher's interest in Nietzsche. Many scattered forces—men of the world, men of letters, artists, plunderers, liberated Jews, epicures and high-livers, materialists scientific and aesthetic, captains industrial and military, crowned heads and financiers, lovers of Nature and the free life, instincts and passions, all manner of opposition to Christianity, worldliness generally—may be said in Nietzsche at last to have found a head. He is therefore no man for the tough-minded among the staff officers of the church of Christ to ignore.

Personally Nietzsche has interested me ever since the word Superman arrested my imagination. A revival of interest took place later when I began to bring back into use the almost obsolete word Anti-Christ and affix it as an epithet to this German revolter, iconoclast, poet, and dreamer.

But Nietzsche may well challenge the preacher's concern for other reasons. He may help us define more clearly just what our own Christianity really is. When my neighbor surveys his boundary lines I find my own farm laid out by elimination. If Nietzsche understands Christianity as essentially socialistic, democratic, that it "takes up the cudgels for idiots," "appeals to the disinherited everywhere"; if he reads the Christian morality as sacrificially redemptive, and the Adam Smith political economy under which Christendom piles up colossal fortunes for the shrewd as but a bold

substitute of our own Devil's law for the law of Christ; if he deems papal despotisms and Machiavellian Jesuitism more congenial to his Anti-Christ paradise than to the Kingdom of Jesus; if he understands that an egoistic race for heaven in the skies, leaving a wrecked world behind, is not Christian, but only a stupid perversion of the very jungle law he himself champions: then it seems to me he is either stealing my territory or throwing me acres that do not belong in my farm. In either case I must undertake to re-establish my own boundaries.

Then again Nietzsche catches my attention because of his scathing and artistic criticisms upon Christianity; for I think he may thus aid us very materially in our own house-cleaning—in that disagreeable scavenger-work within the churches which must somehow get accomplished before the right number of men in street and shop will take our message seriously.

Still again Nietzsche may splendidly serve us, and so deserve our interest, in driving us from many a hiding-place of ambiguity and straddling where men are today calling for plain speech. He may force us to state our views on socialism, self-sacrifice, democracy, depravity, suffering, art, nature, and the earth's future. The heretics and apostates have usually helped bring on ages of creed-making: it may fall to Nietzsche's lot to involve the church in deeper studies of her own foundations—to instigate another age of approximate definition.

If these things are even partly true they suggest ample justification for any preacher's interest in Nietzsche. For the chivalric warning of Oscar Levy, one of the rashest knights in the Nietzschean lists, is worth heeding for its simple truth, when he says, "A new philosophy may be a more powerful enemy than all the navies in the world, and therefore well worth knowing."

Who is this man, who are his antecedents and followers? Whence and what are his main ideas? What has he to say of Christianity? What is his substitute program for mankind? And what can Christianity do with him?

Nietzsche's outward life, meager in incident, may be passed over briefly here. He was a precocious German scholar of good family, lonely, ascetic, invalid, addicted to chloral, who spent some

years in teaching, much time in art criticism, travel, and in writing; who devoured philosophies as most men devour cigars and newspapers; who loved Goethe, Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Darwin; who revolted from all his teachers, examined anew the foundations of morality, with the result that he utterly broke with religion, theism, Christianity, most of all with the Christian theory of morals; who scouted "old Kant" as chief sinner among false philosophers, held Plato the first blunderer into the immortality delusion, accounted Socrates worthy of his hemlock; and who paired alcohol and Christianity as the two most noxious corruptions known to history. He was born in 1844 and died in 1900 after nearly a dozen years of insanity. Comparatively unknown until after his death, his works then began to be widely published and translated. He will be known hereafter as Christianity's diametric antithesis, loud-roaring in frankness and fury, reptilian in subtlety.

## II

The Nietzsche cult is already large and keenly influential, embracing as natural allies many of those artistic souls who believe that all ultimate values are aesthetic, that the universe's sole justification is beauty—a phenomenon not of will but of art; many of those very free anarchic spirits who are against civilization on general principles; with a following also of the "liberated" Jews who by native bias despise Christianity.

The modus is distinctly literary. Nietzsche's own art is of the loftiest order. By force of his extraordinary style alone, at once orchestral and racy, his ideas would carry far. And of no mean ability in the literary tricks suited to their tasks are also his chief propagandists. Such men as Huysmans, pessimist, Baudelaire, devil-worshiper, Maurice Barres, egoist, Oscar Levy, Hebrew free-lance, Ludovici, a London Italian with the charm and polish of a William James, Orage and Huneker and Kennedy and Common: one and all wield quills of biting fluency. It is as a virile publicist "keeping German literature in touch with the needs and demands of the actual life of the present" and "preventing its losing itself in the clouds of an unworldly idealism" that Friedrich Nietzsche is recognized in the *Britannica Year Book of*

1913. And who shall venture to measure to what extent the great war of the nine nations now raging, kindled or kept aflame by the sudden outburst of a new German spirit, must be credited to the subterranean distribution of this Homeric war-worshiper's goading and vitriolic scorn poured out upon modern German decadence and peace-loving mediocrity!<sup>1</sup> "Ye shall love peace," cries this son of the glorious savage,<sup>2</sup> "as a means to new wars—and the short peace more than the long." "Man shall be trained for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior; all else is folly."<sup>3</sup>

But the thought-stuff of Nietzsche's writings is to many minds even more captivating than what has been called "the verbal music that makes him such a beguilement to read." Baron von Hügel, the modernist, in his Roman Catholic treatise on *Eternal Life*, dares, it seems, to reprove both Alfred Russell Wallace and Principal Caird for their lack of sympathy with "the good and true richly present in that wayward and chaotic man of letters, Friedrich Nietzsche."<sup>4</sup> To those interested in reform and race betterment, Professor Devine of Columbia University recommends Nietzsche as useful "notwithstanding his abhorrent doctrines, as indicating the goal toward which a materialistic eugenic philosophy, unrestrained by the Christian ideal of service, would inevitably lead."<sup>5</sup>

According to Hermann, the gifted reviewer of Eucken, what the German immoralist and individualist has to say even meets a long-felt want. "Men everywhere are feeling the hollowness, the contradiction, the spiritual bankruptcy of our sleek and well-fed culture. Nietzsche's sensitive and impressionist soul, nervously fumbling after the inner life, recoils sharply from a blatant and self-conscious culture that wears down the fine edge of the individual. His revolt was noble in itself, and much blame rests with those followers who perversely underscored its most vicious

<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, London, 1909, Introd., p. xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Ransome, *Portraits and Speculations*, 1913, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, chaps. ix and xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Constructive Quarterly*, June, 1913, p. 360.

<sup>5</sup> *The Family and Social Work*, 1912, Appendix, p. 160.

aspects."<sup>1</sup> This long-felt want is picturesquely declared by Levy in his *Revival of Aristocracy*. For two thousand years Europe had degenerated beneath the anarchic evil and weakness of common Christianity. Amid the shrieks of bigoted mobs all eyes were vainly directed toward the hoarse-voiced demagogues (presumably the clergy) when "suddenly there flashed forth into view a philosopher who spoke like the man in the street, entitling himself immoralist, cosmopolitan, egoist, and very free, and sang a song of praise to revengefulness, avarice, lust, and cruelty—to Bacchic and classical enthusiasm, not to Jewish-Nazarene tameness."<sup>2</sup>

True indeed it would seem to be that any warrior of Christ, looking for a foeman worthy of his steel, may well address himself to this notable figure on the field—of whom even the cautious *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* admits concern as to the havoc Nietzsche is likely to play before he is properly pigeon-holed. It says, "He was a prolific writer, and his works are exerting an influence on modern thinking in religion and philosophy which seems rather out of proportion to their real and permanent value."

### III

While it is possible to trace their influence upon him it must after all be admitted that the intellectual and philosophical forbears of Nietzsche are none of them really of his stamp and quality. It is affirmed that he used Max Stirner as a springboard—"Max Stirner," that Kaspar Schmidt, *incognito*, whose little-known anti-socialist book, *The Ego and His Own* (1845), is declared to be a veritable breviary of destruction, the most revolutionary ever written, whose theories would make a *tabula rasa* of civilization. But there were other springboards, points of departure, who helped the expounder of Bismarck's gospel of blood and iron in his leap above (or his dive beneath) the moral foundations of the modern world. There was Stendhal, the Napoleonic soldier and gallant, art critic and man of the world. There was William Blake, "mad naked Blake" whose little poem, "Tiger, tiger, burning bright," still puts its poser to theologians—"Did He who made the lamb make thee?"

<sup>1</sup> *Eucken and Bergson*, Boston, 1912, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, London, 1906, pp. 42, 43.

And there too was the Russian novelist, Dostoievsky, who greatly helped Nietzsche find himself. Even more, there was Darwin, who gave him his entire scientific stage-setting. And there was Goethe with his gospel of a dead paganism, "Love thyself; learn to love thyself, but have reason to love thyself"; wise and wicked Goethe, Greek and Nature-worshiper, who provided Nietzsche with a world-hope to be inserted in lieu of the Christian's shattered heaven.

Less directly and from afar was Nietzsche aided by many a daring spirit of the last century who emitted flashes of erratic and dangerous insight critical of a civilization resultant from two millenniums of pallid Christianity in Europe: Hegel, Schopenhauer, Carlyle, and Emerson. All these the Nietzschean cult still deftly turns to the service of Anti-Christ, greedily lays hold of to slip them under the corner-stone of the new religion of Egoism and Aristocracy. Browning is pilfered, as is A. J. Balfour; Ibsen is captured bodily as the "sign-post of the twentieth century when the aristocratic spirit must enter into combat with the herd-instinct of a depressing socialism." Even our own Peter Forsyth will soon be furnishing ammunition for this enemy's camp, credited as he is with teaching that "theology is better than philanthropy, yea than much fine philanthropy."<sup>1</sup> These and a dozen other minds of almost first magnitude are already, by skilful interpretation, harnessed to the Nietzschean triumphal car in "accentuating the Ego, and aiming at individuality, selfness, and longing for passions mightier and stronger." And no wonder! For what allies these Nietzscheans have, hidden away in the hearts of all aristocrats of money, blood, intellect, and culture; in the native instincts of man unregenerate; in those imperishable self-preservation yearnings and joy-dreams of the very noblest spiritual quality which count so largely in religion itself!

But notwithstanding the eagerness with which all best literature is either put to the sword or rifled to aid and abet the Nietzschean cause, we are not allowed to forget that in Nietzsche himself the resurgence of man's natural life, after two thousand years of suppression, found its general. All others were only "as the mumbling under the earth of spirits of a healthier epoch long bygone." With

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Digest*, August 23, 1913, p. 289.

Nietzsche the volcano shot up, and "over the crosses and cloisters and torture chambers of Christendom there burst the glowing lava-stream of heathendom, fated to sweep away the ancient civilization, ready to rebuild a home for a happier humanity."<sup>1</sup> And Nietzsche himself claims to be all this. "I lay down my oath," he declared in a letter to Georg Brandes in 1888, "that in two years we shall have the whole earth in convulsions. Like the old artillerist I am, I can bring forth cannon of which no other opponent of Christianity ever suspected the existence."<sup>2</sup>

And here lies the weak spot in the whole system—the armor-joint to be searched out and thrust into: that the spring of it all opens up in the uniquely endowed heart of a school-boy. We may well take his disciples at their word and give to him all the glory; for the heart of the doctrine can best be got at genetically by the method of psychology. The system is but the explication of the Nietzsche temperament, genius, character, soul-heritage—these fed on adversity, chloral, and religion, provincial, overripe, and nauseating. Let one know the early life, the soul-soil, of the master and chief disciples of the cult, and one may trace the pathway from those psychological, pathological beginnings, clear on forward to its far goal in this most radical overhauling that the Christian civilization ever experienced; and may behold them as only the natural unfolding of the inner passions, the loves and hates, the unrestrained instincts and impulses of its originators.

Whatever injustice might in particular cases be done in thus going back to the unregenerate "natural man" within the Egoists to account for their ideas, it is the way consistent with their own confessions, theories, and usages. For one of their earliest principles is thus formulated by Levy, "Be natural, follow your instincts, be selfish."<sup>3</sup> The entire philosophy centers round the justification and morally untrammelled exercise of the instincts and passions. Says Ludovici, "The basis of every action to be witnessed on this earth seemed to Nietzsche to be the instinct of self-universalization

<sup>1</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Huneker, *Egoists, a Book of Supermen*, 1910, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, *Introd.*, p. xi.



or self-enhancement, led by the thirst for power."<sup>1</sup> Entertaining this theory, it is not to be wondered at that he gave free rein to his own vigorous instincts and was willing to trample in the dust all the most cherished institutions of customary human life.

Indeed it is just in this manner the Nietzscheans account for all the chief doctrines that stand in their way: as witness the long argument of Ludovici in *Who Is to Be Master of the World?* to prove that the instinctive baseness and poverty of spirit of the humble sufferers who invented the Christian moral code gave rise to the Beatitudes and the whole unnatural doctrine of mutual service, sharing, and sacrifice so distinctive of Christianity. Perhaps Nietzsche's finished theory of the *Genealogy of Morals* lies in embryo here: "Will someone look down into the secret of the way [Christian] ideals are manufactured on earth? What they demand [from God upon their foes] they do not call revenge, but 'the triumph of justice'; what they hate is not their enemy, no! They hate 'injustice' and 'ungodliness.'"<sup>2</sup> That is, the Christian moral system is begotten in the inner demands of the souls of these "cellar animals, saturated with hatred and revenge." And Nietzsche himself explains the whole Christian revelation genetically as the perpetuation of the pleasant sentiments of an intensely love-sick soul; a soul too weak to be aggressive and successful in life, who surrendered meekly to all his enemies, inventing a hell for those who would not love; and who found in the indulgence of this tender passion a happiness which persuaded him that he had a life mission in its dissemination to all mankind.<sup>3</sup>

Now this method, we dare believe, leads toward the truth. In the case of Nietzsche's application of it to Jesus Christ it does not go far enough back into the soul; it is poor analysis, poor diagnosis. But the method justifies us in looking for the fountain-head of the philosophy we are examining back in the very soul of Nietzsche. And what do we find there? Abounding pride, sense of blood, egotism, the aristocratic air, intense passions, self-will, vanity,

<sup>1</sup> *Who Is to Be Master of the World?* London, 1909, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Kennedy, *Quintessence of Nietzsche*, p. 71; also, Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Book I, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p. 247.

hunger for power, suspicion, bitter hatred of moral compulsions, impatience of authority, repugnance to any servitude a keen scorn and despising of the common mass of men, "contempt for the mangy flock of mediocrity," as Huneker words it. These are the seed and the soil of Nietzscheanism. That they were the very tissue of his soul-structure no one can doubt who will open-mindedly read the several reliable sketches of his life.

Mr. T. M. Kettle, in his Introduction to Halévy's *Life of Nietzsche*, speaks of "that proud independence, one may almost say that savage isolation, which was the native climate of his soul"; and of "a vanity so monstrous that it seems from the first to have eaten of the insane root"; and affirms that he was "abundantly dowered with the insight of malice."<sup>1</sup> "He was obsessed by his indignations," says Huneker; while Halévy, speaking of the school-boy period, assures us that "the passions and the powerful desires, which thirty or forty years later were to inspire his work, already animated this child with the bulging forehead and the big eyes." Even in early life, says Kennedy, Nietzsche showed a "commanding, aristocratic nature." And in the sketch of his life by his sister, she speaks of "the aristocratic ideal, which was always so dear to my brother." He himself avers, "From my very childhood I sought solitude."<sup>2</sup> His Zarathustra is but Nietzsche's self when he advises, "If you have helped anyone, you must wash the hands that helped him, for they are unclean."<sup>3</sup> Pity is the ultimate vice. "Where lie thy greatest dangers?" asks Zarathustra, and answers, "In compassion." Every indulgence of sympathy delays the coming of Superman. "The last temptation of the Superman is sympathy for a race revolving blindly in this cycle of change."

Among these native presuppositions in the soul out of which the system came, traits exposed in every variety of expression in all his books, there is one bias exactly fitted to be the original germ; we are assured that to Nietzsche the terms "good" and "bad" are but synonyms of "aristocratic" and "plebeian." Ludovici informs us that it was Nietzsche's appropriation of this idea found in the

<sup>1</sup> Halévy, *Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*, pp. 8, 10, 11, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Quintessence of Nietzsche*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Zarathustra*, quoted in Halévy's *Life*, etc., p. 12.

study of the old Greek, Theognis, for a school essay, in his twentieth year, "that gave him his first hint and put him on the right track."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is plain that aristocratic pride and will-to-power were two of the earliest and strongest instincts in the young Nietzsche. And we are assured that they were only kindred spirits whom the publication of his *Will to Power* summoned about him; everyone felt his truth "whose heart had not been grieved to death, whose Ego had not frozen within him." We have only to watch these traits grow dominant and override everything great and small that stands in their way—customs, philosophies, religion, the state, and even morality itself—to comprehend the genesis of the Nietzschean cult. It is the dominance of these instincts of pride and will-to-power in the elect souls, the natural masters of the world; it is the making of the evolutionary war principle of survival of the mightiest animal man, the measurement of all things, that gives point to the startling announcement of a coming "transvaluation of all values." And here it is that we shall find Nietzsche making many of his least gracious remarks about Christianity—mainly because the Christian has the shockingly bad taste to prefer (in his philosophy at least) God and heaven, and holiness and love, to the Nietzschean values, power, will, self, and Superman.

#### IV

Now Nietzsche's position is intelligible enough; rational enough too, if you permit him to sight along the barrel of Nature and determine her goal and method. To him Superman is the measure of all values. Evolution is the pathway; and selfishness is the method, the supreme secret of Nature's success. The issue is squarely drawn, then, between the methods of love, service, sacrifice for the weak, on the one hand; and of struggle, selfishness, dominion, exploitation of the weak for and by the strong, on the other hand. It is a question which morality is the better, considering the end: the "natural" or the Christian.

A society, we are told, that is built upon the perverse and unnatural sentiment of brotherhood, equality, love, mutual helpfulness, of carrying along instead of destroying the weak and

<sup>1</sup> *Who Is to Be Master of the World?* p. 38.

miserable specimens of humanity; a morality that preserves all that is unfittest, weakest, and least deserving of life and perpetuation—such a society, built upon such a morality, must come to utter degeneracy. And there, declares Nietzsche, with many a cutting proof and criticism, is where our civilization has now arrived after two thousand years of Christianity.

For it is the Christian system that has brought about the coarse and stupid mediocrity of the sodden European populations, a dead level of feeble life—notwithstanding economic divergences that would shame antiquity. This calamitous reversal of Nature's method—this revolt of the slaves against the morality Nature herself devised for the elevation of the type Man—must now be atoned for in the bloody sweat of a tumultuous repentance. This present Christian mockery of civilization must be swept away—this society self-confessed, in the words of Alfred Russell Wallace, as “rotten from top to bottom, the worst the world has ever seen.” The boards must be cleared of it, and the race must return to the old Grecian Nature-pathway, to the life of instinct and indulgence, of joy in art and beauty; to the enthusiasms of power and conquest, of pride and strength; to a civilization built on force and the literal enslavement of the masses, and crowning itself with an aristocracy whose right it is to rule and to enjoy. Thus only shall the race evolve great personages, the predecessors and promise of Superman.

To sum up, then: the great blunder of all the eons of human existence on the earth is Christianity with its morality of helpfulness to the weak, its mission of saving the lost. Levy's words voice the verdict against Christianity for all the Nietzscheans: “The balm of Gilead is venom. Christ is a stain on the Jewish nation, the worst pollution of mankind. Christianity is insanity, a plague, the deadly foe of all that is truly great.”<sup>1</sup> Holding these things to be true, it is no wonder that, as Hunecker says, “they set out to smash Christianity.”<sup>2</sup>

To picture the utter nonsense and perverseness of Christianity, Stendhal invented a gruesome sort of parable, almost too coarse for recital, which runs like this: “Once upon a time God was a very clever artisan. Day and night he kept on working and talked

<sup>1</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, pp. 107 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Egoists*, p. 265.

very little. But he was always devising something new, suns, comets, and so on. But one fine day God died quite suddenly—perhaps of heart disease. His son, who was being brought up by the Jesuits, was at once called in. He was a gentle and zealous youth, without an inkling of practical mechanics. He was conducted into his father's workshop and told to govern the world. Being in a quandary, he seized the levers and by mistake reversed the engines; and things have been going wrong with the world ever since."<sup>1</sup>

For evidence of how wrong things have been going, reference is made to Carlyle and Wallace and Dickens and Robert Hunter and Jacob Riis; to Siberia and the Congo; to factory systems and city slums; to the sky-scraping fortunes of the few and the crushing war taxes on the many; to traffic in vice and labor of little children; to the hog-and-hyena drama of drink; to thirty-thousand-dollar banquets and three-million-dollar temples of pharisaic self-worship; to pagan religions imported for the half-educated, and to Satan the Fourth (Mephisto was the Third) incarnated in plutocratic attorneys of industry lobbying in senate and parliament.

But now, at length—fortunately for the Universe—Nietzsche has arrived on the scene (perhaps a century or so too early—"the day after tomorrow only is mine," he says) and is about to correct all this fearful blunder and get things back in the good old way again. Burke said that no discoveries were hereafter to be made in morality; Nietzsche says that the greatest discovery the world has known in two millenniums is to be made in morality, and that he, moreover, has made that discovery himself, the new having already begun to supersede the worn-out morals of the Christian order. Levy puts it thus: "If I have blamed here Christianity, the Christian morals; if I have spoken ironically of all the lighter, minor, and female virtues this teaching has produced and still produces: I have done so in the name of those who have lifted themselves above them, who have outgrown them, who have acquired greater than Christian virtues, who stand nearer to the pagan culture of Greece and Rome than to that of the revolutionary good people who supplanted them."<sup>2</sup> Speaking of Napoleon—a dear exemplar of the

<sup>1</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, p. 24. See also, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, Preface, p. x.

Nietzschean theories—and of his idea of starting a new religion, this modern Christ-despising Jew says: "Instinctively the great man felt that his greatest enemy was the old Koran, with its rights of the generality, of all of the people as against extraordinary men, the right of the weaker against the strong, of the uncouth against the beautiful, of woman against man, of the serf against his lord—this Nazarene view of mutual love, containing within itself the postulate of equality."<sup>1</sup>

And of course it may be added that the strong, then as always, would more successfully have snapped their fingers at the "rights" of the weak had not the weak somehow got their claims incorporated in a religion, in a system of morality that by hook or crook somehow got vogue; had not the weak been possessed fortunately of a Bible which, as Kingsley said, is from cover to cover "the poor man's comfort and the rich man's warning."

Shall we run a little way farther into the beautifully consistent jungle-morality of these Nietzscheans, and see how thoroughly anti-Christian it all is?

Since the fall of the Man on Horseback (thanks to awakened Christian democracy) "philanthropy has become universal, and extended to all that is feeble, commonplace, pitiable, unsound, and helpless; and these elements, through the charity and humanity of the epoch, were horribly fostered."<sup>2</sup> "A nation," we are told, should consist of aristocrats, "exclusive of slaves, the serfs of commerce and agriculture, archaeologists and members of parliament. It should embrace only the free."<sup>3</sup> Stendhal, Huysmans, Baudelaire, and Stirner loathed democracy, hated "all gabble about fraternity and equality," all sentimental fuss and fuddle of a pseudo-humanitarianism, the education of the masses, social prophylactics, the bitter medicaments of self-sacrifice and self-denial. "Humanity has become the Moloch to which everything is sacrificed." "The Ego has too long been suppressed by the sacred ideas of religion, state, family, law, morals."<sup>4</sup> "Our wail about our neighbor's soul is the wail of a busybody, the blight of modern life." "Mind your own business is the pregnant advice of the new Egoism." To

<sup>1</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Egoists, a Book of Supermen*, pp. 359, 361.

displace the Ego is to invert the social pyramid. To love our neighbor as ourself is trouble-breeding.

The new Sermon on the Mount begins, "Become ye more evil, that goodness may increase and joy delight you."<sup>1</sup> Let us have the "courage to rebaptize our badness as the best in us."<sup>2</sup> They re-echo the epigram attributed to Fontenelle, "To be happy a man must have a good stomach and a wicked heart."<sup>3</sup> To this school the hideous things to be shunned are such as marriage, family, calm, pity, contentment and comfort, the green-pasture happiness of the herd, together with security, safety, alleviation of life for everyone. Life, they affirm, is appropriation, injury, conquest of the strong over the weak, suppression, exploitation.<sup>4</sup> Audacity, deceit, cruelty meet their approval. Their three cardinal virtues are pride, pleasure, and love of domination.<sup>5</sup> Man's true nature is fiendish and aggressive; power is its loftiest and most wholesome craving. This true nature of man, they prophesy, cruelly calumniated as it now is, shall one day emerge from the depths and flourish again. The will-to-power is to be the redemption of humanity from its lapse into feebleness through the Christian perversion. These are the skilfullest prescriptions they can write for the health of the human race!

## V

Something must now be said of Superman and the glad eons of race-development that shall lead to him as Nietzsche's substitute both for the heaven-goal of Christianity and for all collateral human interests in economy, statesmanship, and the humanities. Here is the siren-song he sings to the strong, ambitious, "enjoying souls" who feel within themselves the mighty powers which Christianity would subdue into meekness and yoke-bearing—that Dionysian enthusiasm and fulness of life characteristic of the best Grecian physical and artistic glory. Winsome contrast is all this indeed to the Apollonian correctness and conservatism, the piety, weakness, and death which characterized Grecian life before the coming

<sup>1</sup> *Revival of Aristocracy*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *Egoists*, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> Halévy's *Life, etc.*, p. 12.

of Dionysus, and which, the Nietzscheans affirm, is the distinctive trait of the decrepit and waning civilization that now marks the end of the second Christian millennium. No apostate Julian ever urged more ardently the rapturous possessions within arms' reach of the strong—if only the inhibiting morality of these Christians could be gotten out of the way. "If"—and that is no small word even to Nietzsche. For it is this same Christian morality he grants as appropriate to the slave-type of mankind<sup>1</sup>—the vulgar masses, groveling souls who by nature and instinct "look up"; and are the servants of those above them, the hero-worshippers and train-bearers of earth's rightful lords. And these Nietzsche sees now in deadly combat with humanity's other type, Nature's favorites, the master-type with its appropriate master-morality; those proud and powerful spirits who by nature "look down" on the rest of the world as their rightful prey—their soil wherein to flourish. And in this combat lies Nietzsche's supreme horror—his fear for the welfare of Nature in her effort to evolve Superman;<sup>2</sup> the winner will determine the future of the race: whether Nature shall succeed in producing her Superman, or the world miss its mission and meaning, and have to go back and begin over again—with the hope of avoiding the Christian blunder next time.

Just who is this Superman? Of necessity largely unknown and imaginary<sup>3</sup> (as are the details of our own Christian heaven), human history and literature can at least furnish hints—a sort of picture-language with which to sketch some strange superior creature as far beyond present man as present man is beyond ape and mastodon. And so, as Huneker says: "Nietzsche wove into Superman's make-up echoes of Wagner's Siegfried, Ibsen's Brand, Stendhal's wicked heroes, the Renaissance Borgias, the second Faust of Goethe, and not a little of Hamlet," making a monster of perfection "that may one day become a demigod for a new religion—and no worse than contemporary mud-gods manufactured daily."<sup>4</sup> This, then, is Nietzsche's yearning—and mission in life: to persuade men to forego the "selfish" heaven-seeking of personal

<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> A. R. Orage, *Nietzsche, the Dionysian Spirit of the Age*, 1906, pp. 70 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Egoists*, p. 267.



immortality, the mutual service and sacrifices here, that the largest possible number may in some eternity glorify God and (alas!) enjoy him forever; and so to live in unselfish indulgence in passions and power, in exploitation and cruelty, in war and pitiless lordship over the contemptible masses of humankind, that, dying, one shall leave some legacy of non-moral might toward the making of that race of Titans far off in the eons beyond all Good and Evil. A novel dream? No. It almost merges into something quite familiar. Perhaps that same slave-morality may win for its votaries, "according to promise," their far-off heaven! And perhaps those God-defying immoralists, avaricious of power and deity ("If there were gods, how could I bear not to be a God!"<sup>1</sup> cried Nietzsche), may, Lucifer-like, be assigned the other rôle in the drama of eternity and enter into the joy of—the Pit! Perhaps.

## VI

Last of all, something should be said of a possible cure for all this spreading Nietzschean epidemic. What is Christianity going to do with Nietzsche?

Of one thing we may be sure: ignorance, silence, disinterest are no proper weapons with which to meet a mind of his type. It is easy, and to many of us congenial, to pursue the policy of quiescence, as if the main business of the soldier of Christ were to slip in personal safety through the battle of life and escape without a wound. Nietzsche is already poisoning thousands of souls whom the church of God should be ambitious to save to better ends. He can and he will do incalculable damage to the spiritual promise of humanity. To let him alone is wickedness; to underestimate is folly. To say, as does Professor A. T. Robertson in a recent volume, that "Nietzsche has had his vogue in Europe, but is passing,"<sup>2</sup> is to betray undervaluation of patent facts—inability to weigh and measure the volume of vital literature swiftly flowing from his afflated disciples. We must take him in hand. And to do this rightly and avoid a mere war of words we may well take counsel of Dr. Crothers, of Cambridge, and say candidly to Nietzsche: "It is of more importance that I understand you, than that

<sup>1</sup> Halévy's *Life, etc.*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *The Church, the People, and the Age*, New York, 1914, p. 319.

you understand me." He is Anti-Christ through and through, and proudly confesses it. In comparison with him the Paines, Ingersolls, Voltaires, Strausses, and Renans are but faultfinders within the Christian fold, all of them certainly within the Christian morality. Nietzsche is not. He will appeal to men of the "honest," irreligious, worldly type; to men who crave a gospel of strength, a gospel for sky-scrapers and hotel lobbies and battlefields. He will have disciples who love literature and art and brains, however deficient these may be in ethics. If Christian Science and New Thought and Theosophy and Hinduism and other "belly-gods and gods that heal" can find a following in the midst of our most fully worked Christian parishes, the chances are fair that in due time the Nietzschean cult will outnumber them all. For he too has immense masses of fact on his side—"fact gnomic, cutting, and ironical, that holds all figures of the orator." We shall need first of all to understand Nietzsche, and thus suck the strength of our living enemy, as well as eat honey from the carcass of the dead lion.

To this end the leaders of the Christian ministry must begin to appraise justly the eighteen volumes that stand to Nietzsche's credit—some of them truly masterpieces, Rubaiyats the world will puzzle over, dream over, and not believe, yet not let die. Such are *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the *chef d'œuvre*, the gem of which all the rest are the setting; and *The Will to Power*, *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Twilight of the Idols*. And what jewel chapters are to be found here and there in these! The Dionysian and Apollonian legend and world-claw; and the wise and useful little parable of the three metamorphoses of every ripened soul in its passage through to final play-time: how the spirit becometh a camel, the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child.<sup>1</sup> It is the history of mind: first a slavish burden-bearer of others' wares, then a devouring appropriator of possessions in one's own right, then oblivion and a new beginning, a prime-motor at the game of creating. The world will be richer and wiser for some of these Nietzschean gifts; and the rugged mind that can stand hard knocks will find both splendid foe and worthy recompense.

But the larger truth is that Nietzsche has come to our time as a call to judgment. It may be said of him, without irreverence to

<sup>1</sup> *Who Is to Be Master of the World?* p. 15.

Another, that in and by means of him "the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed." A new alignment will surely be made apparent in things religious and moral as men come to their personal decisions for or against him. When the fight is over the men of the world and the men of the church will know better than they do now, for example, whether our Christian religion is, for the common practice of common Christians today, a religion and morality of sacrificial redemptiveness or not; whether Christianity is consistent or not with a world-program of race elevation here on earth; whether heaven and an eternity of life are in store for any of us or not; or whether heaven and eternity are not just about the sole and sufficient reason for there being any Christian faith at all.

In conclusion, and as the sole hint here of a direction in which we may look for a full philosophic answer to the Nietzschean position, let it be said that the same Germany which produced this literary and philosophic poison has produced also the great thinker who may help the Christian morality stand its ground. Poison is Nietzsche; and Eucken is his antidote. Eucken's reasoned message is that of a concrete spiritual life, a life begotten from above, and in substance less an affair of power than of vital and creative participation in the Good, the Beautiful, and the True, as these find material expression on earth and spiritual expression in the kingdom of heaven.

Our task is but the old task of Christianity in all times, though now there is urgent need that Christian men bow with all their might under the burden of its demonstration: to prove to the Nietzscheans and to the world afresh that love is nobler than power; that, as Frank Thilly says, "The social man is the Superman"<sup>1</sup> —is already the forerunner of the better man that is to be, whether on earth or in eternity.

Once again power has met love and challenged it to mortal combat. These were precisely the forces that grappled, as we know, in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, where each had its characteristic triumph. Power there proved master in the realm of flesh by the murderous shedding of blood in pursuit of self-will; love there proved master in the realm of spirit by the sacrificial surrender of life in pursuit of heaven's loftiest ideal of holiness.

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, 1913.